

**TUNISIAN UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' USE OF CODE CHOICE
AND CODE SWITCHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: DESIGNING AND
VALIDATING OBSERVATION CHARTS**

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Abstract. The aim of the current study is to present the methodology for exploring code choice in the context of Tunisian higher education focusing on the use of Code Switching (CS). The study addresses these two research questions: To what extent and in what circumstances are Arabic, French and English used in Tunisian higher education contexts? What are the functions of code choice and code switching? To find answers to the research questions, this study leans on two types of observations namely informal observation and formal observation. The informal observation took place in informal settings, namely university corridors, libraries and eateries and the formal observation was conducted in classrooms. The aim of the informal observation is to investigate the languages used by students in public places. The classroom observation is used again to investigate the languages used in classes. After presenting the observation charts, the researchers presented the procedure of piloting. Due to the COVID situation, the researchers suggested piloting the observation charts by the use of recorded videos from Tunisian students' university life, videos on multilingual classrooms and online courses. The study may methodologically contribute to the literature of observation design and validation.

Keywords: Observation, formal, informal settings and validation.

1. Introduction

The Tunisian higher education situation is characterized by the rivalry between Arabic and French, on the one hand, and French and English, on the other hand. The Language-in-Education Policy (LEP) in Tunisia seems to be imposed by the post-colonial situations mainly for economic or political reasons. As a result, the French language has had a strong influence on education. It is the dominant language of instruction in higher education leading to the marginalization of the Arabic language. English is regarded to be a threat to other languages in Tunisia [Phillipson, 2007] and the status of French as a second language is no exception to this.

Given this situation, the study aims to investigate language use in Tunisian higher education with a particular attention to CS. To achieve this goal, we suggested using observation as a data collection method to gather natural data from formal (classrooms) and informal settings (university corridors, libraries and eateries). In this paper, we present first the observation charts and then the piloting process of these charts.

2. Previous studies on Tunisians' attitudes towards language choice and code switching in higher education

There are a number of previous studies conducted on Tunisians' attitudes towards language choice. Lawson and Sachdev [2000], for example, study the attitudes of 169 Tunisian University students towards code-switching (CS). Their attitudes were obtained using a matched-guise technique. The findings reveal that French and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) were rated lower by Tunisian university students than code-switching, Tunisian Arabic and English. Their analysis of university students' diaries shows that the varieties spoken most frequently in Tunisia

were CS (42%) and Tunisian Arabic (38%), English (14%) while the use of French (5%), and Modern Standard Arabic (1%) was rated lower.

Similarly, Daoud [2011] argues that CSs to English is still at the one or two-word level, stating that “teenagers and college students tend to sprinkle their talk with expressions like “sorry,” “thanks,” “no problem” and “no comment,” but do not seem ready yet to go beyond the two-word stage” (p. 22). It seems that English in Tunisia is influenced by globalization and it is the result of the use of English as a lingua franca.

Sayahi [2011] conducts a study on the patterns of Tunisian Arabic/French CS. The researcher uses semi-directed sociolinguistic interviews with 12 speakers to investigate the type and frequency of code-switching and the use of French borrowings. The results demonstrate that education plays a role in distinguishing the group with a higher education from the group with only a high school education. The university-educated group shows a much higher frequency of code-switching that reflects a higher degree of competence in the French language. The study also shows that the contact between the two languages has led to intensive lexical transfer from French into Tunisian Arabic. The most switched types are single nouns and nouns phrases, including “déjà, donc, alors, les SMSs...” (Sayahi, 2011, p. 131).

Bach Baoueb and Toumi [2012] investigate CS in the interactions of Tunisian students at the faculty of Economics and Management in Sfax, Tunisia. The study investigates students’ classroom conversations and out-of-classroom peer interactions. Classroom CS is found to be controlled whereas out-of-classroom CS is uncontrolled. The results show the appearance of two types of CS, namely discursive switches and lexical switches. Tunisian Arabic/French CS is intensively used by the participants although French is the imposed language to serve communicative functions. The participants also switch to French in uncontrolled situations for using technical words.

The studies which have been reviewed so far use observation as a data collection tool. But they did not provide enough information about how they designed and validated their observation sheets. The present study aims to show in details how the researcher developed and validated her observation charts.

3. Methodology

Observation is defined by Zedeck [2014, p. 241] as “the careful, close examination of an object, process, or other phenomenon for the purpose of collecting data about it or drawing conclusions”. It is a research tool used to collect rich data. Gorman and Clayton [2005, p. 40] also define observation studies as those that “involve the systematic recording of observable phenomena or behaviours in a natural setting”

This research used two types of observations, namely formal observation and informal observation to collect data from a variety of ways. The formal observation aims to collect data from classrooms and the informal observation takes place in informal settings, namely university corridors and eateries. The classroom observation investigates the languages used in classes. The aim of informal observation is to investigate the languages used by students in public places focusing on code-switching.

The researcher attempted to develop two systematic observation charts relying on Dörnyei’s [2007] methods for recording events, namely the event sampling and Curdt-Christiansen’s [2020] essential features of an observation, including 1)physical place; 2)social actors; 3)interactions; 4)sequences; 5)time.

4. Designing the observation charts

4.1. Chart 1

As shown in Figure 1, the informal observation chart comprises two main parts. The first part has general data such as date, the name of the observer, the name of the institution and the

physical place. The second part includes a number of aspects relying on Dörnyei's [2007] methods for recording events, namely the event sampling and Curdt-Christiansen's [2020] essential features of an observation, namely interactions, social actors (participants) and turn-taking, as shown in the observation chart. The researcher adds four aspects, including examples, topics of the interactions, functions and comments.

OBSERVATION CHART 1
Informal Setting: Corridors, libraries and eateries

Date:
Name of the observer:
Name of the institution:
Physical place:

Interaction	Participants (ages, gender, roles)	Turns : speakers	Examples	Topic	Function	Comments
1						
2						
3						

Figure 1. The observation chart of the informal setting

4.2. Chart 2

As illustrated in the following figure the formal observation chart consists of two main parts. The first part contains general data such as date, the name of the observer, the name of the institution, the investigated group and the type of classes. The second part has a number of aspects, including time, type of classes, the observed unit, social actors, linguistic features: language(s) used by the teachers, language(s) used by the students, examples of code-switching, functions and comments.

OBSERVATION CHART 2
Formal Setting: Classroom Observation

Date:
Name of the observer:
Name of the institution:
Group (specialty/ level):
Type of classes:

Time	Unit: Activities	Social Actors (participants)	Linguistic features		Examples of code- switching	Functions	Comments
			Language (s) used by the teacher	Language (s) used by the students			
1 min							
2 min							

Figure 2. The observation chart of the formal setting

5. Results of the validation process

The *validation process of the observation charts of the informal and the formal settings* is based on a number of *videos* from Tunisian students' university life, videos on multilingual classrooms and online courses (Youtube). We watched the videos and we attempted to fill in the observation charts and notice any limitations.

5.1. Informal setting

After piloting, some limitations of the observation chart of the informal setting appeared. The first part of the observation chart was revised. The 'name of the observer' was omitted. 'The name of the institution' and the 'physical place' appeared to be confusing. We decided to explain 'the physical place' and add between brackets university corridors, libraries and eateries. The rest of the aspects were remained.

The conclusions of piloting also suggested revising the second part of the observation chart. We revised the second aspect, which is about the participants and their bio-information (Item 2), including age, gender and roles. We decided to omit the variable 'age' and to keep the rest because it seemed to be difficult to identify the ages of the participants. As presented in Figure 3, the observation chart has the aspect 'examples' (Item 4) which proved to be not clear. We decided to clarify it and change it to 'examples of code switching'.

OBSERVATION CHART 1
Informal Setting: Corridors, libraries and eateries

Date:

Name of the institution:

Physical place (corridors, eateries and libraries): corridors

Interaction	Participants (gender, roles)	Turns : speakers , CC, CS	Examples of code-Switching	Topics	Functions of code-Switching	Comments
1	Females Students	CC : Arabic CS : French CC : French CS : Arabic	Mais, Oui	Results of exams	- Explanation - Prestigious purposes	

Figure 3. The content part of the observation chart of the informal setting

Overall, the observation chart proved to be generally satisfactory during piloting. It covers all the visible features that can be observed. It was easy to complete the chart. The aspect ‘comments’ was particularly useful to note the weaknesses of the chart and improve it. The final observation chart consists of six items, namely interaction as the unit of analysis, participants, turns, examples of code switching, topics of the interactions, and functions of code switching.

5.2. Formal setting

After piloting, the observation chart required a few modifications. The first part of the observation chart was revised. The name of the observer was omitted and the rest of aspects remained. We clarified the item ‘types of classes’ by adding ‘lecture or tutorials’.

Figure 4 shows that the second part of the observation chart was revised. We decided to omit the aspect ‘social actors (participants)’ (Item 2) because this chart is designed for a classroom observation and the participants are teachers and students. Linguistic features (Item 3) are divided into two components, namely language (s) used by the teacher and language (s) used by the students. After piloting, we decided to replace ‘language’ by ‘code choice’. We are particularly interested in the rate of language use, i.e. to what extent Arabic, French and English are used by teachers and students. Additionally, we noticed that the item ‘functions’ required clarification because according to chart it can refer to code choice or code switching. We changed this item to ‘functions of code switching’.

OBSERVATION CHART 2
Formal Setting: Classroom Observation

Date:

Name of the institution: Online

Group (specialty/ level):

Type of classes (lecture/tutorial): tutorial

Time	Unit: Activities	Linguistic features		Examples of code-switching	Functions of code- switching	Comments
		Code choice used by the teacher	Code choice used by the students			
1 min	1	French				
2 min	1		French	CS to Russian: 'Surka'	Explanation	

Figure 4. The content part of the observation chart of the formal setting

Based on the above discussion, the final observation chart implied five main features which are as follows: time, the unit of analysis (activities), linguistic features, examples of code switching, functions of code switching and comments.

5 Conclusion

This paper raises one of the methodological issues related to the designing and validation of observation charts. It presented the process of designing the observation charts for both formal and informal settings. It also showed the limitations of the observation charts that appeared in the piloting process. This study sheds light on these limitations for the purpose of revising and improving the charts.

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